

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A knee protection apparatus for an occupant of a vehicle, comprising:

an airbag disposed in front of a knee of the occupant;

an inflator for supplying gas to the airbag upon collision of the vehicle so that the airbag is deployed by the supplied gas; and

a non-inflatable airbag support that is directly attached to the airbag and is structured to expand upon deployment of the airbag so as to provide a barrier between the instrument panel and the ~~airbag-airbag~~,

wherein one end portion of the airbag support is free.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the airbag support includes a temporarily attached portion that is detached from the airbag upon the deployment of the airbag.

4. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the airbag support includes an instrument panel side portion provided to one side of the airbag that is closer to the instrument panel and an occupant side portion provided to the other side of the airbag that is closer to the occupant.

5. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the airbag support includes a cut-off portion at which the airbag support is split upon the deployment of the airbag.

6. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the instrument panel side portion and the occupant side portion of the airbag support

are temporarily attached to each other, so that they are detached upon the deployment of the airbag.

7. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the instrument panel side portion and the occupant side portion are arranged such that the instrument side portion expands before the occupant side portion upon the deployment of the airbag.

8. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according claim 1, wherein the airbag support is provided with an expansion guide for guiding the airbag support to stably expand in a predetermined expanding direction.

9. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the expansion guide is a guide stitch sewing the airbag support and the airbag together, at least one portion of the guide stitch extending along the predetermined expanding direction.

10. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the guide stitch is formed by a portion of a stitch made to form the airbag.

11. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 9, further comprising a tether, wherein the guide stitch is formed by a portion of a stitch sewing the tether to the airbag.

12. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the expansion guide is formed by a reinforcement provided in the airbag support, at least one portion of the reinforcement extending along the predetermined expanding direction.

13. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the reinforcement is formed by a portion of the airbag support that is sewn into a specific form or at which a stitch is made.

14. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the reinforcement is formed by a portion of the airbag support on which sealing substance is applied.

15. (Currently Amended) A knee protection apparatus for an occupant of a vehicle, comprising:

an airbag disposed in front of a knee of the occupant;

an inflator for supplying gas to the airbag upon collision of the vehicle so that the airbag is deployed by the supplied gas;

a non-inflatable airbag support that is structured to expand upon deployment of the airbag so as to provide a barrier between the instrument panel and the airbag.

an airbag case, in which the airbag is stored and wrapped; and

an airbag cover for covering an opening of the airbag case,

wherein the airbag support and the airbag cover are integrally formed and the airbag support is stored in the airbag ~~case~~case,

wherein one end portion of the airbag support is free.

16. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the airbag support and the airbag are integrally formed of a common base cloth.

17. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the airbag support and the airbag are separately wrapped and stored.

18. (Currently Amended) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, the one end portion of the airbag support being a ~~bottom~~top portion and ~~the other~~another end portion of the airbag support being a ~~top~~bottom portion,

wherein the airbag support is attached at the bottom portion to the airbag, and the airbag support and the airbag are stored with the top portion of the airbag support being separately wrapped from the airbag.

19. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

an airbag case in which the airbag is stored and wrapped,

wherein the airbag and the airbag support are wrapped separately and stored in the airbag case in such a way that the airbag support covers the airbag in the same airbag case.

20. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 4, further including an airbag case for storing the airbag, wherein the instrument side portion and the occupant side portion of the airbag support are wrapped separately and stored within the airbag case together with the airbag in such a way that the airbag wrapped is covered by the occupant side portion and the occupant side portion is covered by the instrument panel side portion.

21. (Currently Amended) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~one end portion of the airbag support is free and~~ an anchor portion is provided at the ~~same one~~ end portion.

22. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the anchor portion is formed by a portion of the airbag support on which sealing substance is applied.

23. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the anchor portion is formed by a portion of the airbag support that is sewn into a specific form or at which a stitch is made.

24. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the airbag support is provided with a friction reducer for reducing friction between the airbag support and the airbag.

25. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the friction reducer is formed by a layer of sealing substance created on one side of the airbag support closer to the airbag.

26. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the friction reducer is formed by overlapped portions of the airbag support.

27. (Previously Presented) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the friction reducer is formed by an arrangement of the airbag support and the airbag in which a weave direction of base cloth of the airbag and a weave direction of base cloth of the airbag support are different.

28. (Currently Amended) The knee protection apparatus according to claim 1, the one end portion of the airbag support being a ~~bottom-top~~ bottom portion and ~~the other~~ another end portion being a ~~top-bottom~~ top portion, wherein the airbag support is attached at the bottom portion to the airbag while the top portion is free, and a peripheral length of a top side of the airbag support is longer than a peripheral length of a bottom side of the airbag support.